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the ROHMER REVIEW

No. 17

NOTES FROM THE EDITOR

This issue is being published within ten days of the previous issue, and both numbers will be mailed together to those with continuing subscriptions. This procedure will help somewhat to reduce both postage costs and the labor of addressing and stuffing envelopes---and, believe me, any help in either area is more than welcome!

As noted elsewhere, credit for rescuing this issue's featured article from the obscurity of crumbling newspaper files goes to British bookseller Vernon Lay. Mr. Lay also recently discovered another bit of Rohmerian ephemera which is worth noting. In 1936 a group of American stage and film people (including Noah Beery, Charley Chase, Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., Kay Francis, Harry Langdon, Zasu Pitts, and Edward G. Robinson) organized a benefit stage show in London to raise money for a sports charity. The show was called "American Midnight Frolics" and was presented at the Coliseum at midnight on December 10, 1936. An elaborate slick-paper programme book, identifying the affair formally as the *American Stage and Screen Tribute to the King George V National Memorial Fund*, was presented to everyone who attended the show. On page 51 of this programme book appears a Foreword by Sax Rohmer. Less than 200 words long, it consists of generalities extolling the friendliness and generosity of Americans. This is one of the very rare instances of Rohmer contributing prefatory material to a publication other than his own books.

In the letter column of *TRR* #13 Stephen Shutt described a Fu Manchu parody from a British radio series called *Round the Horne*. A sample from the original show can be found on a long-playing record titled (naturally) *Round the Horne* [BBC Records #REH 193, monaural, distributed by Pye Records Ltd., London]. The same record includes a skit concerning the excavation of an Egyptian tomb, the Tomb of Tut-en-Assa (sp?). Those who survive the initial exposure to this madness may wish to sample *Round the Horne - Vol. II* [BBC Records #REH 240]. The Horne scripts, by the way, were written by Barry Took and Marty Feldman. A collection of seven scripts, hilariously illustrated, was published in 1974 by The Woburn Press and reprinted in the following year by Futura Publications in paperback form. Several of Horne's encounters with "Chou En Ginsberg, M.A. (Failed)" are included.

From Fu Manchu's daughter to Hester Prynne: that is the route followed by actress Tsai Chin, whom *TRR* readers may remember as

[continued on page 6]

The Birth of Dr. Fu Manchu

BY

SAX ROHMER

in a talk with the "Daily Sketch"

Interview conducted by Geraint Goodwin

[Reprinted from the *Daily Sketch*, London, Thursday, May 24, 1934].

His name is Dr. Fu Manchu and of course you know him, know his inscrutable look and his pale rheumy eyes, hooded like an old hawk's.

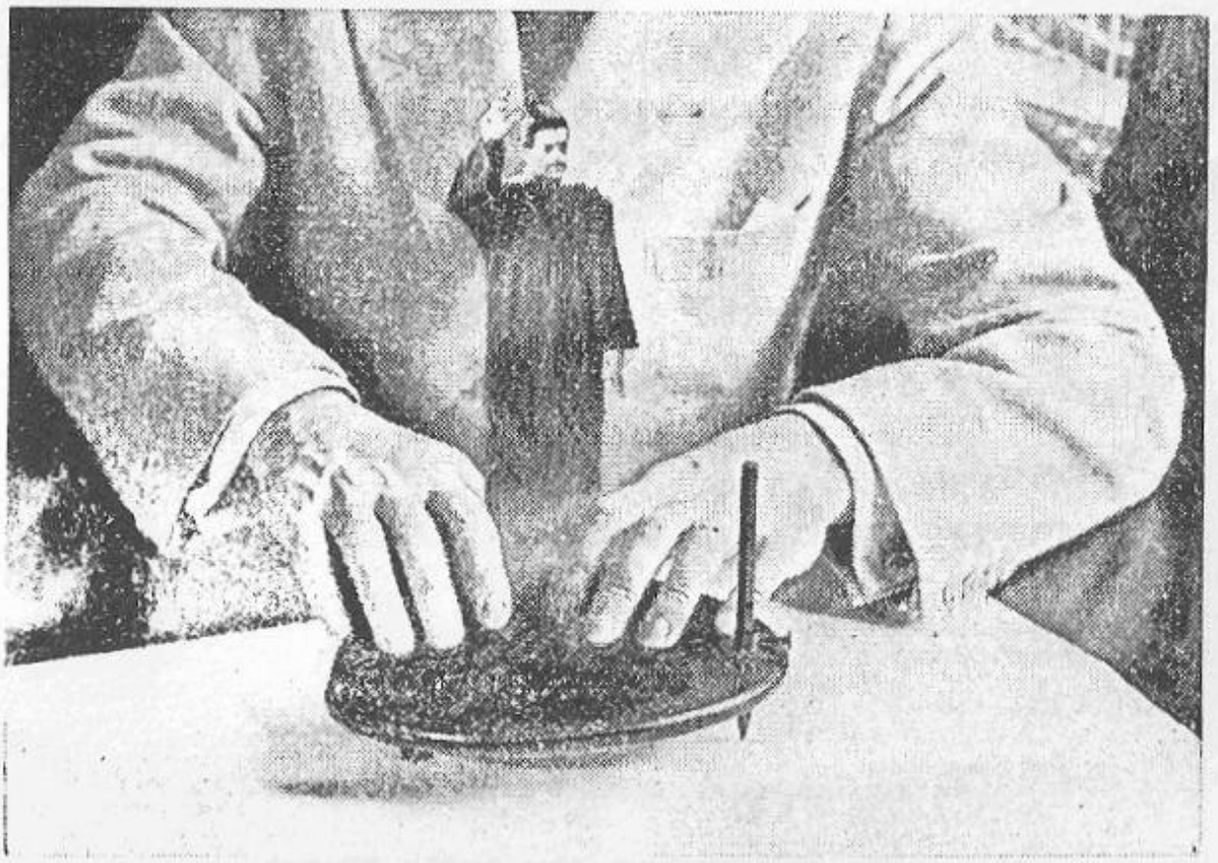
You know, too, that he would be a nasty fellow to meet, for evil, as we understand it, is to him a mere phrase. What secrets are there in the depths of his oriental mind? You might as well cross-examine the Sphinx. It is enough to say that he is Fu Manchu, and some millions of people in the world know who Fu Manchu is.

A House in Clapham

For Fu Manchu, though he is an institution, saw the light of day in a lodging house in Clapham. He put his creator, who was a struggling young writer, in Easy Street. And as Fu Manchu would never die and would never lie down, he went on in his exhuberant life from book to book.

Up to date he has made a mere matter of £150,000 for the young Irishman who created him. His adventures have been translated into every European language. One has to go back to a certain other young Irishman who created Sherlock Holmes to think of a parallel.

You want to know all about Fu Manchu? You want to know whether there is a Fu Manchu in fact as well as fiction. You might hope to see him in Limehouse Causeway or down in Liverpool's dock-land. You might wonder whether he has muscled in on the warlord



Mr. Sax Rohmer's hands on the planchette board that told him he would be a success as a writer, and added the word "Chinaman." The Chinaman developed into Dr. Fu Manchu.

racket or whether he has fixed one all-seeing eye on Manchukuo. You might want to know whether he's yellow or just the Yellow Peril.

He Just Happened

You would argue that somewhere there must be a counterpart, some village Fu Manchu who has been born to blush unseen. You would say that this man whom we know so well couldn't just have happened. He might have been touched up a bit, you will say, but there must have been something to go on.

Well, you can ask the author. He's a very affable fellow and modest with it. He talks of Fu Manchu as you or I would talk of the Smiths or the Robinsons, or the people next door. Just that same air of nonchalant friendliness.

You can ask him and he will tell you in the most casual way that Fu Manchu just happened, that he built him up as laboriously as a sculptor fashions a figure, putting on a bit here and taking off a bit there, until, lo and behold! there it is in its completeness.

How did the idea come? Well, it's a good story.

In those pre-Manchu days Sax Rohmer, a young Irishman, was doing what all young Irishmen are supposed to do---that is to say, take London by storm. The storm was a lot way farther off than next week's rent. He searched around for a plot, but no plot came.

One day was just like another, and there was not a great deal to show for it.

But let Sax Rohmer tell his own story:

"I was a young man and I was ambitious. I had written my first story at seventeen, and I had not written another one; perhaps that was why.

Hoping and Arriving

"All the time I thought it would be very nice to be an author; you know the sort of thing that appeals to young men in rooms in a London suburb. I suppose all young men in lodgings want to be writers; the trouble is that there are so many lodgings!

"Looking back on those days I was happy enough. You know Stevenson's line about it being better to travel hopefully than to arrive, though I don't think that's true. It would be much better travelling hopefully if you knew you were going to arrive, some day, somehow, somewhere.

"A few of us shared a studio in Clapham Old Town, and we liked to tell one another what we were going to do when we were famous. We also told our guests. How we managed to entertain I don't know. The pièce de résistance was roast potatoes and the other course was shredded wheat. There was beer, of course.

Enter Planchette

"The illusion of fame never left me even at Clapham station. But don't put that down or you will get lots of Claphamites writing in to say that beauty is in the eye of the beholder or something of the sort.

"Well, one of the fellows and I bought a planchette board. We were always asking it questions. I remember I asked it whether I should ever be a success as a writer of fiction, and it said that I would. When I asked it in what direction it answered the one word 'Chinaman.' We asked it again and still the answer was definitely and unmistakably 'Chinaman.' I couldn't understand it at all for I knew nothing in those days about China or Chinamen.

"I must have remembered that when I sat down to write a book some time afterwards. All the usual types had been worked to death and so I lighted on the idea of a Chinaman, and what a Chinaman he was going to be!

"He was to be rather tall and rather gaunt, with a tremendous cranial development as befits a genius. So I began to build him up. Then I thought he ought to have some sort of defect, so I made him have a kind of film over the eyes, as with a bird. It was a new one on medical science and still is, but there it was. He was to be a great linguist---a man who knew every civilised language and many dialects. He was to be absolutely impersonal, not criminal according to his own way of thinking, for he was true to his consuming desire to revolutionise civilisation. He was to be the embodi-

ment of the idea that the East has been gaining knowledge while we have been building machines, the supreme master mind hovering on the border of madness, as so great a genius would.

He Caused Trouble

"That was how I turned him over in my mind. Well, when I began to write, it seemed that I knew the man intimately. He assumed his own shape and there he was. He was a success and has continued so. I have now written seven books about him---the *Daily Sketch* is to publish the seventh---and from beginning to end and taking everything into account I suppose he has made me about £150,000.

"He has brought me in a spot of bother as well. When I was in New York some years ago the Chinese students of Columbia University organised a protest and, I believe, went to the Chinese Consul about him; said he misrepresented the Chinese character. But I have never claimed Fu Manchu represents the Chinese character. All I say is that Fu Manchu is Fu Manchu. He can't help that; no more can I."

Well, that's the story of the sinister doctor of the Orient. Next time you see him looking out at you with his inscrutable eyes you will know how he came to be there.

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Comments by Cay Van Ash:

I suppose that "The Birth of Dr. Fu Manchu" is as nearly accurate as one could expect from Sax. In practice, as I understand it, the planchette was under the hands of Elizabeth, and the experiment was conducted on their own premises, no others being present at the time. Also, the studio in Clapham Old Town which he mentions was, of course, the place in Oakmead Road, properly belonging to his friend Dodgson, as described in Chapter 5 of *Master of Villainy*, and the goings-on there somewhat pre-dated the planchette episode.

For me, the photograph of Sax's hands proved of peculiar interest. Like any student of crime fiction, I had long realised in a theoretical kind of way that a person's hands are distinctive. But it was not until I saw that picture that it really came home to me. I thought at once, "Yes! Those are his hands!" and it honestly gave me quite a shock.

Notes by the Editor

"The Birth of Dr. Fu Manchu" served as a sort of advertisement for *The Trail of Fu Manchu*, subsequently presented as a serial in the *Daily Sketch*. The serial was originally announced to begin on Monday, May 28, 1934. However, according to information supplied by W. O. G. Lofts, it was not actually published until a month later: 25 June to 6 July 1934, daily except Sunday, in eleven installments.

The "interview" seems typical of the kind of publicity that Rohmer customarily received. Aside from providing an example of some genuinely awful newspaper prose, it demonstrates the difficulties facing anyone who would try to piece together accurate biographical or literary information from such sources. Compounding the interviewer's inadequacies, there is the positive delight which Rohmer seems to have taken in dressing up the facts, providing meaningless "explanations", and scrambling time-sequences. Those who have read *Master of Villainy* will have no trouble in spotting the inaccuracies in the *Sketch*'s offering.

On three later occasions Rohmer offered different and lengthier accounts of the origin of Fu Manchu. "Meet Dr. Fu Manchu" was a radio talk written for the B.B.C. and published in a collection of similar talks, *Meet the Detective* (Telegraph Press, 1935); reprinted in *TRR* #10. "The Birth of Fu Manchu" was the first installment of the autobiographical series called "Pipe Dreams"; it appeared in *The Empire News*, Manchester, 30 January 1938. Finally, "How Fu Manchu Was Born" was written for *This Week* (29 September 1957; reprinted in *TRR* #2) as a prelude to the Fu Manchu short stories which that magazine published.

For the benefit of new readers, it should be noted that the Sax Rohmer biography, *Master of Villainy* by Cay Van Ash and Elizabeth Sax Rohmer (Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1972), is still in print. Copies may be obtained from F. and S. F. Book Co., P. O. Box 415, Staten Island, New York 10302---$10.00 hardbound, $4.00 paperbound.

I am indebted to British book dealer Vernon Lay for calling the *Daily Sketch* article to my attention and for supplying a copy of the paper.

the Devil Doctor's offspring in the Harry Alan Towers Fu Manchu films starring Christopher Lee. During May and June 1977, Ms. Chin appeared in the role of Hester Prynne in the Cambridge (Mass.) Ensemble's production of *The Scarlet Letter*. The following comments by Ken Emerson in *The Boston Phoenix*, 17 May 1977, are typical of the glowing reviews elicited by her performance. "As Hester ... Tsai Chin is extraordinary, hinting rather than hammering, holding back while [the actor playing Dimmesdale] pulls out all the stops. ... [Ms. Chin is] a prodigiously gifted and subtle actress [who] brings Hawthorne's prose to spellbinding life."

The Winter 1976 issue (X:3) of *Journal of Popular Culture* contains an article entitled "From Fu Manchu, Evil Genius, to James Lee Wong, Popular Hero: A Study of the Chinese-American in Popular Periodical Fiction from 1920 to 1940" by Sue Fawn Chung. This is a fascinating article, persuasively written and thoroughly documented, and demonstrating a considerable familiarity with Rohmer's works. Anyone interested in this topic will find a wealth of further reading in the references cited in the "Notes" following Ms. Chung's article. [This issue of *JPC* is available for $4.00 from the Editor, University Hall, Bowling Green University, Bowling Green, Ohio 43403.]

In *TRR* #12 the "Bibliographica Rohmeriana" department contained a checklist of French translations of Sax Rohmer's works. It was noted there that only six of the Fu Manchu books had been published in France. (A seventh, *La colère de Fu-Manchu*, appeared subsequently.) A French publisher is now about to embark on the first *complete* publication of the book-length Fu Manchu histories. For those which have previously appeared in French, the old translations are being revised and corrected; and new translations have been prepared for all the "missing" titles. The series will be issued in paperbound omnibus volumes, with two or three novels in each volume. The first installment, consisting of the first three Fu Manchu books, is due to appear in September, followed by a second volume in December 1977. I do not have at hand the information about titles, publisher, or price of these volumes, but I hope to have the full story in *TRR* #18.

The reprint editions of nine Sax Rohmer titles announced over a year ago by The American Reprint Co. (see "Book News", *TRR* #14) have not yet appeared, and arrangements for their publication are, shall we say, still incomplete.

Briefly noted: *The Disciples of Cthulhu*, edited by Edward P. Berglund, DAW Books #UW1258, Oct 1976, $1.50. Contains an Introduction by Robert Bloch and nine new stories related to H. P. Lovecraft's "Cthulhu Mythos". One of the stories, "The Silence of Erika Zann", is by *TRR* contributor James Wade.

A Question of Time

BY

CAY VAN ASH

Many who have studied the thirteen books and four shorter works describing the history of Fu Manchu will have noticed a fair number of inconsistencies. These are principally due to a very simple cause: the record, extending over almost half a century, was compiled by many narrators---Dr. Petrie, Shan Greville, Alan Sterling, Bart Kerrigan, and others unnamed---not all of whom were in the same position to observe and report. Consequently, some serious difficulties have arisen as to the dating of the earlier episodes, and even the respective ages of the principals involved. Some attempt at clarification seems called for.

Despite later mis-statements to the contrary, Dr. Fu Manchu's first "mission" to England began in the early summer of 1911 and ended in the autumn. Although reports of isolated incidents did appear in the daily press, publication of Dr. Petrie's full account of the events was delayed for a year. ("The Zayat Kiss" first saw print in the issue of *The Story-Teller* dated October 1912, on sale in September 1912.) The newspapers' silence during this period can be ascribed to Nayland Smith's extraordinary influence. As Petrie stated: "Not one-half of the truth (and nothing of the later developments) had been made public. Nayland Smith's authority was sufficient to control the Press." [*The Mystery of Dr. Fu-Manchu,* Chapter XXVIII.] Petrie's speculations on the identity of Fu Manchu [*ibid.,* Chapter XXIV] make it clear that at least the final phases of his chronicle were written after the overthrow of the Manchu dynasty and the proclamation of the Republic in the winter of 1911-12, but the adventures themselves took place during the months leading up to that climactic event.

Two years after his first visit Fu Manchu was back again, in the summer of 1913. His renewed activities were suspended in October, when he was shot and seriously wounded. But he was not out of action for very long. Nayland Smith and Dr. Petrie, who, supposing him to be dead, had set sail for Egypt, had scarcely reached there before they were hastily recalled to London, where they returned in November of the same year.

The ensuing series of incidents continued until the late Spring of 1914, with an intriguing gap of some two or three months during which nothing was recorded. Since Dr. Fu Manchu was still far from well, he may have remained inactive. There are, however, some subsequent references to notes made by Dr. Petrie, presumably concern-

ing episodes too shocking for immediate disclosure. Perhaps one day we shall know.

Full reporting of the circumstances surrounding Fu Manchu's second campaign in England was delayed even more than had been the case with his first visit. Partly this was due once again to Nayland Smith's intervention, but of equal importance was the fact that by the Fall of 1914 Britain was embroiled in events of more immediate importance: World War I. Wartime conditions in England may also explain why Petrie's second and third chronicles of the battle against Fu Manchu appeared first in the United States. (*Fu Manchu and Company*, which became *The Devil Doctor* in book form, began publication in *Collier's* in November 1914, while British publication, in *The New Magazine*, was delayed until the following June. *Collier's* began the third series, *The Si-Fan Mysteries*, in April 1916; British publication, in *The Story-Teller*, began in September of that year.)

The scheme of dates summarized above may be easily cross-checked. The events described in *The Trail of Fu Manchu* commenced in the first days of 1934. (See the opening lines of Chapters 1 and 2 of the book.) Dr. Petrie's daughter, Fleurette, who was born a year after his marriage to Kâramanèh, was then eighteen years old. She had, therefore, been born in 1915.

Shan Greville is, then, clearly much in error when, in *Daughter of Fu Manchu*, he refers to "the death of the Chinaman Kwee ... late in 1913" and "the raid on the house in London in 1917." Yet the error is understandable. Greville himself had taken no previous part in the fight against Fu Manchu. He confesses, "The doings of this great and evil man ... had reached me merely as rumors in the midst of altogether more personal business." By this latter he means his participation in the World War of 1914-1918, and he obviously supposed the Fu Manchu campaign to have taken place concurrently. Having innocently adopted this false point of departure, he naturally attempted to make other time references correspond when reconstructing his conversations with Superintendent Weymouth and Sir Denis Nayland Smith. Smith could hardly have described Fah Lo Suee as "about seventeen in those days" and "under thirty now"---but, taking into account the precocious maturity of Oriental women, she may well have been no more than fifteen when Dr. Petrie first encountered her in 1914.

Unlike Dr. Petrie, who had been able to make notes of events while they occurred, Shan Greville had no such opportunity. His record was written from memory, nearly a year later, under canvas on the site of ancient Nineveh. No one who had taken part in the earlier Fu Manchu episodes was then present to assist him, with the exception of Sir Lionel Barton---and readers may easily imagine how much help might have been expected from him.

Illustrators and motion picture directors have added to the general confusion by mutually contradictory presentations of the

chief actors in the drama. At the time when it all began, both Dr. Petrie and Nayland Smith were young men of about the same age. Petrie had not long been established in his South London practice and had few patients on his books. The researches of Mr. David Braveman, reported in *The Rohmer Review* #3, assure us that Petrie was born in 1884. Consequently, he would have been twenty-eight in 1911.

Smith might have been a year or so older, but not more. He held the post of Police Commissioner in Rangoon, and it was not uncommon for men of his age to hold such positions in the British Colonial Service. Critics who, incidentally, have complained that he did little in the Sherlock Holmes style of crime detection ignore the fact that he was not a detective but an administrator. His later position as Assistant Commissioner at New Scotland Yard was likewise administrative and, together with his knighthood, a logical outcome of his previous service. Originally he had been summoned from Burma to act as a special advisor and coordinator in the Fu Manchu case, merely because chance had already furnished him with some knowledge of the Si Fan. The man officially in charge of the investigation was Inspector John Weymouth.

By far the most misleading impression given to the general reader is that of Dr. Fu Manchu himself. Smith's occasional references to him as a supernormal being of incalculable age may be taken as exaggerations born of the heat of the moment, rather than as literal truth. Nothing in the known facts supports this characterization. When Shan Greville first saw Fu Manchu, presumably in 1928 (since, in addition to his other lapses, he fails to date his own record), he judged him to be "little short of seventy", and was probably right.

According to what Nayland Smith could discover, Fu Manchu had at one time administered the province of Honan under the Empress Dowager and, in these days, this alone provokes a feeling of remote antiquity. We forget, however, that the Empress Dowager died only in November 1908.

Dr. Fu Manchu claimed to hold academic distinctions from four universities. Since he certainly did not register in that name, it is impossible to check this claim. I think it most likely that he obtained his first degree at the medical school founded by Christian missionaries in Canton, and followed this up with post-graduate work at Edinburgh, the Sorbonne, and Heidelberg. All this he could have accomplished while still in his twenties, giving him ample time for his own strange researches and Imperial government service before appearing in London, then about fifty years of age.

Possibly it was the Boxer uprising of 1900 which led to Fu Manchu's hasty retirement from office in Honan, and drove him to seek refuge in the wilds of Sinkiang. There, no doubt, he made some studies of Tibetan mysticism and first came into contact with the Si Fan, at that time no more than a traditional organization of cut-throats and thieves. In this unpromising material he was quick

to perceive the nucleus of a great pan-Asian federation by means of which the tottering Imperial throne might be rebuilt on a solid foundation. But although his intellect and personality clearly dominated the society from the outset, when Fu Manchu began his war against China's enemies in 1911 he was not yet President of the Si Fan, nor did he even hold a seat on the Council of Seven.

The collapse of all centralized authority in China, and his own failing health, caused him to abandon his projects after 1914. The Si Fan became dormant until 1928, when the ill-advised attempts of his daughter to re-activate it forced him once again to assume control, but with the greatest reluctance. In the following year, when Fu Manchu's twenty-five years of research resulted in the successful preparation of an *elixir vitae*, the situation was dramatically changed. Henceforth the Si Fan was to be his undisputed property---reorganized and vastly expanded to operate on a world-wide scale.

At seventy or thereabouts, Dr. Fu Manchu was less robust than many other men of his years. He had suffered much and driven himself mercilessly, so that he had looked old even in middle age. The *elixir* halted the process of aging and restored him to full health and vigor, but it did not otherwise rejuvenate him. He continued to look his age as of that moment when the first injection took effect, and would do so indefinitely.

When last reliably heard of in 1959, it is likely that Fu Manchu had only just reached the century mark. If the Smith letters in *The Rohmer Review* #12 may be taken as authentic, the Doctor has by now long passed that hurdle, and Sir Denis Nayland Smith himself is well on the way.

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Further Note on Dates:

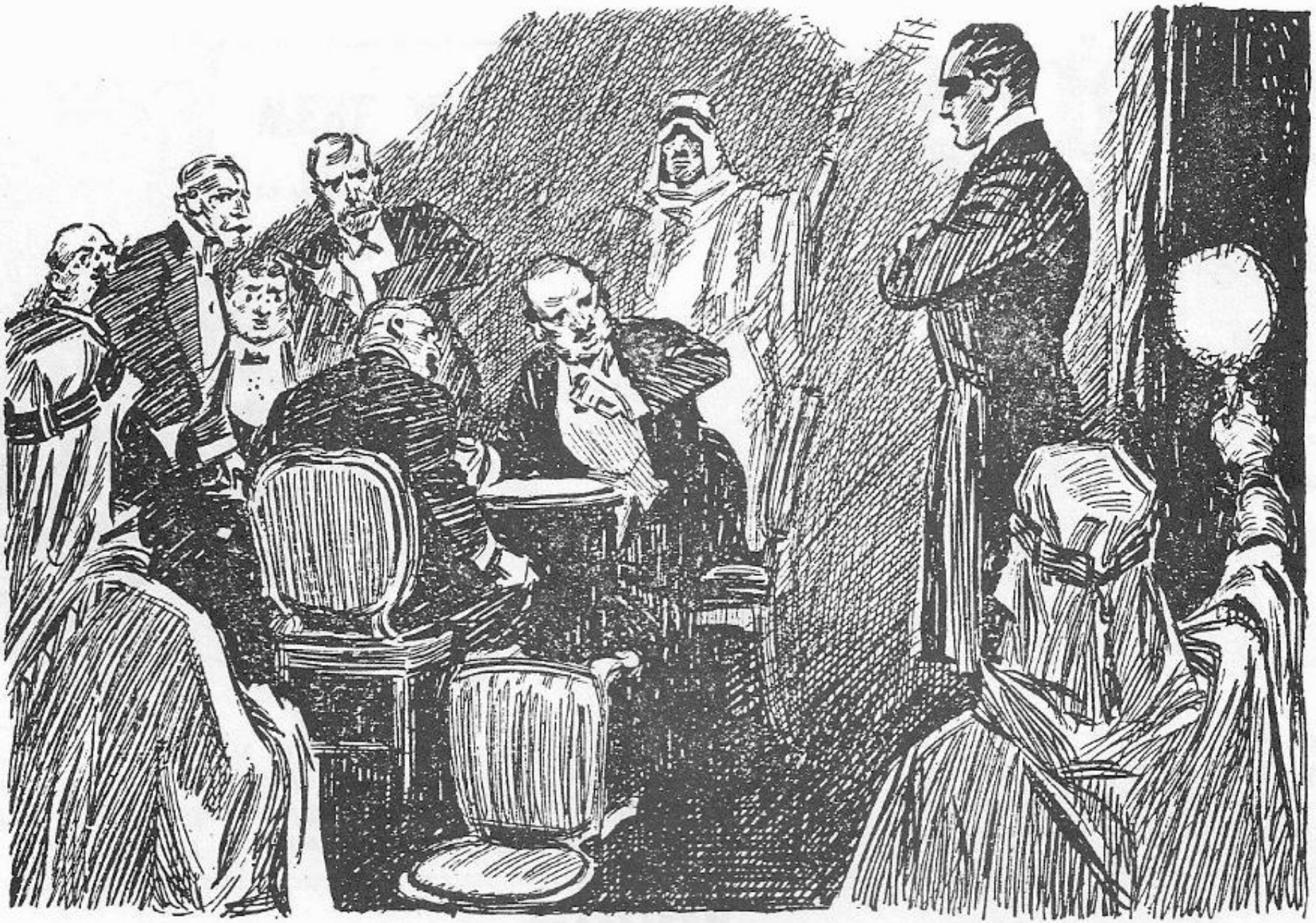
The events narrated in *Daughter of Fu Manchu* can reliably be placed in the latter half of 1928, concluding in the autumn (see Chapter 10), which could be as late as November. Sir Lionel Barton's expedition to Nineveh presumably began late the following summer, and by the autumn of 1929 Shan Greville was completing his account of his meetings with Fah Lo Suee and Fu Manchu; this account was published early in 1930. Even before the first chapters appeared in print, Sir Lionel Barton had taken his niece Rima and Greville off on a further expedition to Khorassan, which led to the discovery of the El Mokanna relics and the eventual encounter with the revivified Fu Manchu. By the time the party reached Ispahan, it was again autumn; at this point, Rima made a reference to "what happened two years ago in England" (*The Mask of Fu Manchu*, Chapter 13). Later, when the group returned to England, Greville observed, "We had been absent from England for more than a year." (*ibid.*, Chapter 43) References to a topcoat and to Fah Lo Suee's fur coat indicate that the final episodes *[continued on page 18]*

These Stories are Printed at the Request of Hundreds of Readers who have Written to The Editor asking for More Sax Rohmer Mysteries. You will be Intrigued by the Author's Amazing Plots and the Astounding Revelations that are Made in the End. Who is Séverac Bablon? A Man or an Organization? Though his Fame is World-Wide, his Identity is, as yet, a Complete Mystery

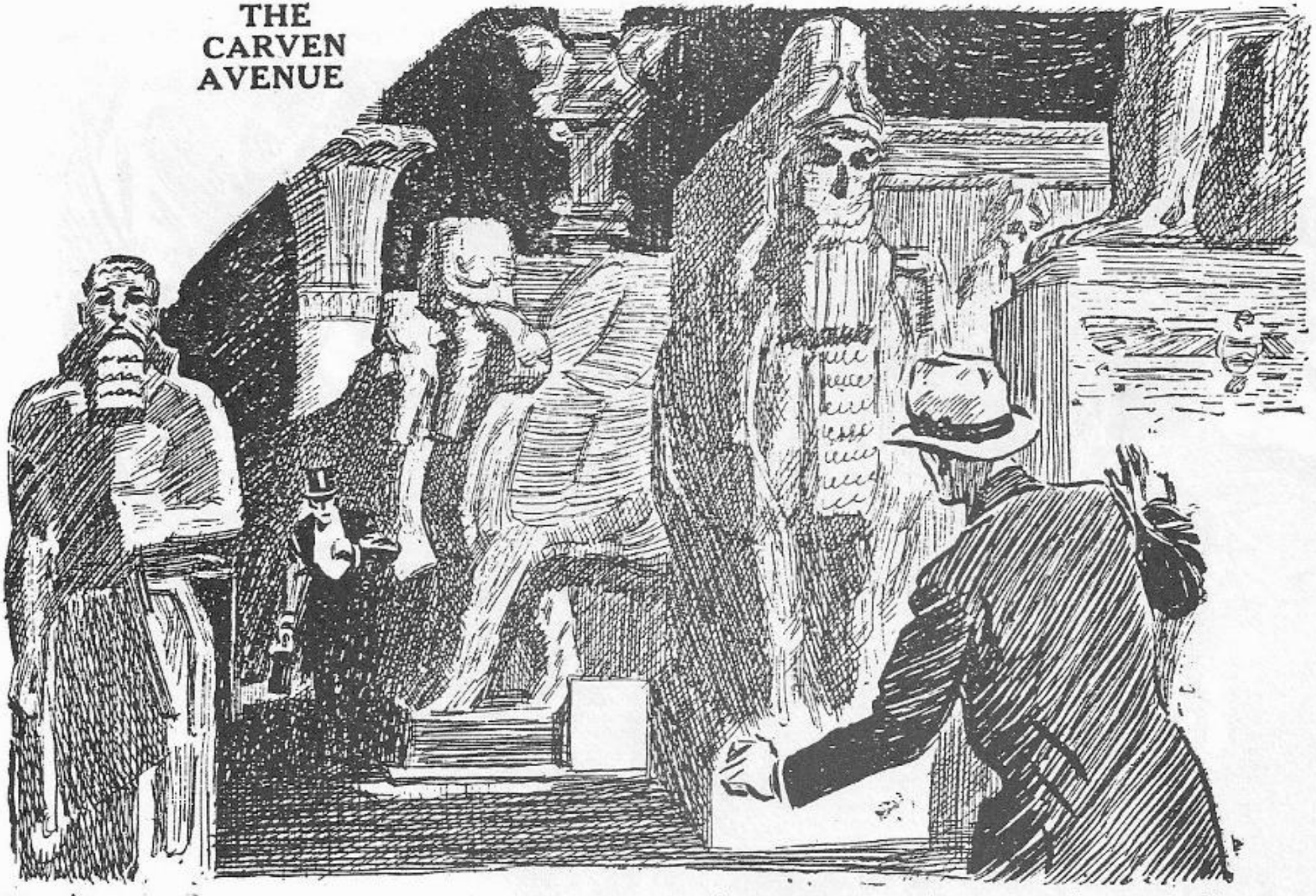
The SINS of SÉVERAC BABLON

STORY No. 1
"THIRTY MEN WHO WERE ALL ALIKE!"

By SAX ROHMER



Inside the open window stood a tall man in a closely buttoned frock coat. He carried no arms, but wore a silk half mask "Good Heavens!" exclaimed Mr. Rohscheimer. "It's Séverac Bablon!"



High above his head a watery moonbeam filtered through a window . . . Towering shapes, as of statues of gods, loomed, awesomely, in the gloom. . . . He detected a black shape emerging from the shadows

M. Duquesne, who, from his damp post in a clump of rhododendrons, had watched him approach, rubbed his wet hands delightedly. "It is he!" he muttered. "The Séverac"

THE PAUL HARLEY SERIES

Sax Rohmer's detective character Paul Harley was first put on paper in *The Sins of Séverac Bablon* (serialized in *Cassell's Magazine* in 1912). Although he does not appear as a character in the book, "Mr. Paul Harley, of Chancery Lane" is referred to in Chapter XVII as one of the "three great practical investigators of the world." In 1920 Harley became more than merely a name when Rohmer made him the central figure in three short stories:

1. The Man with the Shaven Skull	°*The Premier*	12 Mar 1920
	Collier's	18 Sep 1920

[reprinted in *Fifty Enthralling Stories of the Mysterious East*, ed. by Achmed Abdullah, London: Odhams Press, nd]

2. The White Hat	°*The Story-Teller*	Jun 1920
	Collier's	13 Nov 1920
	The Mysterious Traveler	Mar 1952

[reprinted in *Alfred Hitchcock Presents: A Month of Mystery*, N.Y.: Random House, 1969]

3. The House of Golden Joss	°*Cassell's Magazine*	Jly 1920
	Collier's	7 Aug 1920
[as House of the Golden Death]	*Saint Mystery Mag.*	Aug 1959

[All three of the above are included in the Rohmer collection *Tales of Chinatown*, London: Cassell & Co., 18 May 1922; Garden City: Doubleday, Page, 22 Sep 1922.]

The reception of these short stories encouraged Rohmer to put Harley into a book-length adventure. In fact, two Paul Harley novels were written, both in the autumn of 1920. The circumstances surrounding the writing of these novels are confused, and it is still a matter of conjecture as to which was written first. The two magazine serializations appeared almost simultaneously, one in Britain and the other in the U.S. The British serialization of *Bat-Wing* (the title is hyphenated in British editions but not in the U.S.) ran into bad luck: it began in *Cassell's Saturday Journal*, but the magazine ceased publication without finishing the serial. The final portions appeared in another weekly magazine from the same publisher, *The Penny Magazine*. (*Bat-Wing* suffered further indignity some years after its initial publication. It was plagiarized and converted into a Sexton Blake novel called *The Black Skull* [Sexton Blake Library, New Series, No. 217, 5 December 1929]. Sax

Rohmer knew of the plagiarism, but declined to pursue the matter---see page 242 in *Master of Villainy*.)

4. BAT-WING	(incomplete)	°*Cassell's Saturday Journal* (sr12)	4 Dec 1920 - 19 Feb 1921
	(continued)	°*The Penny Magazine* (sr9)	26 Feb - 23 Apr 1921
		Short Stories (sr5)	Feb - Jun 1921
[book]		°London: Cassell & Co.	1 Mar 1921
		Garden City: Doubleday, Page & Co.	29 Apr 1921
5. FIRE-TONGUE		*Collier's* (sr12)	25 Dec 1920 - 12 Mar 1921
[book]		°London: Cassell & Co.	Sep 1921
		Garden City: Doubleday, Page & Co.	20 Jan 1922

[In November 1928 *Fire-Tongue* was serialized in nine installments in one or more U.S. newspapers serviced by NEA(Newspaper Enterprise Association), Cleveland. Exact dates are not known, nor what newspapers carried the serial.]

Harley's next appearances were in a short story and a short novel (or long novelette), the latter being one of the most popular stories in the series.

6. The Dyke Grange Mystery	°*The Story-Teller*	Feb 1922
	Chicago Tribune Sunday Magazine	28 May 1922
7. The Black Mandarin	*Collier's* (sr3)	4 - 18 Nov 1922
[short novel]	°*The Illustrated London News*	Christmas Number 1922
	°*Pictorial Magazine* (sr3)	1 - 15 Dec 1923
	Star Novels Quarterly	Mid-Sum 1932
	Saint Mystery Magazine	Dec 1965

["The Black Mandarin" is included in both the British and the U.S. editions of the collection *Tales of East and West*, London: Cassell & Co., Sep 1922; Garden City: The Crime Club (Doubleday, Doran), Apr 1933.]

Paul Harley's next exploit was, in more senses than one, a dramatic one. He served as the detective/Secret Service man in Rohmer's stage melodrama *The Eye of Siva*. He was impersonated in

this "Eastern Mystery Investigated in Three Acts" by Arthur Wontner, who shared the audience's attention with an array of special effects and a live Manchurian leopard. (For more information the reader is referred to the article "The Lost 'Eye'" in *TRR* #6.)

8. THE EYE OF SIVA [play] — The New Theatre (London) — Opening night: 8 Aug 1923

Although the script of *The Eye of Siva* was never published, Sax Rohmer did make use of the plot and characters (most of the latter with altered names) in another short novel which was probably written while the play was still running in London. Paul Harley was retained as the leading character.

9. The Voice of Kâli — *Short Stories* — 10 Dec 1923
°*The Grand Magazine* (sr3) — Jan - Mar 1924

The remaining exploits of Paul Harley are chronicled in five short stories spread over the next sixteen years.

10. Red Mist — °*The Story-Teller* — Oct 1924

[included in the 1925 and later C. Arthur Pearson editions of *The Quest of the Sacred Slipper*, as an advertising gimmick]

11. At the Palace da Nostra — *Collier's* — 11 Jan 1930
°*The London Magazine* — May 1930

[may also have been reprinted in *The Grand Magazine*, *ca.* 1932-33; included in the U.S. editions of *Tales of East and West*]

As the Harley series drew to a close, Rohmer indulged in his frequent practice of re-cycling earlier material. A slight variant of the central plot device in the Moris Klaw story "Case of the Tragedies in the Greek Room" was used in "The Treasure Chest Murders", while "Skull Face" is virtually the same story as "The Man with the Shaven Skull". The locale has been shifted from England to Egypt and most of the characters' names have been changed, but large parts of the text are identical in the two stories.

12. The Death of Boris Korsakov — °*Britannia & Eve* — Mar 1937

13. Skull Face

14. The Treasure Chest Murders

["Skull Face" was sold to *The Great Ormond Street Hospital Magazine* in June 1937, but the magazine

folded without publishing the story. "The Treasure Chest Murders" was supposedly sold to *Collier's* at about the same time, but was never published there. All three stories 12.-14. are included in *Salute to Bazarada and Other Stories*, London: Cassell & Co., 1939; N.Y.: Bookfinger, 1971 {May 1972}.]

A final note: Paul Harley's friend and sometime chronicler, Malcolm Knox, appears on his own in two additional stories, "The Pigtail of Hi Wing Ho" (1916) and "The Hand of the Mandarin Quong" (1922), both included in *Tales of Chinatown*. While Harley is not mentioned in either story, they may still be considered peripherally related to the Paul Harley series.

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A Question of Time *[continued from page 10]*

of the adventure occurred in the late autumn or early winter of 1930. Greville's and Rima's wedding probably took place in November or December 1930. The preoccupation with married life easily explains why Greville's account of *The Mask of Fu Manchu* did not see print until well over a year later (May 1932, in *Collier's*).

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A Review

CURSE OF THE PHARAOHS by Jack Younger. Manor Books #535-15204-150, (paperback), 1976, pp. 1-215, $1.50.

A recently-discovered cache of early Eighteenth Dynasty papyri is sent by the British Museum to America for exhibit, over the protests of the discoverer, Sir Basil Walton. The papyri contain secrets only hinted at in the material unearthed in Tut-ankh-Amen's tomb in 1922, and the old curse---"Death shall come on swift wings to him who disturbs the sleep of Pharaoh"---seems to be in effect again.

The book was obviously intended as a tie-in with the Tut-ankh-Amen exhibit currently touring the U.S. The plot and characters are a combination of *Brood of the Witch Queen* and the Karloff film *The Mummy*, spiced with generous helpings of gore and explicit sex. Most of the characters are fools or knaves, and none of them are interesting---not even the unamiable caricatures of two well-known figures in horror/fantasy publishing, who appear under the thinly disguised names 'Warren James' and 'Jay Forrest'. Both come to messy ends. So does the book.

Since the last installment of this department in *TRR* #15, two titles have been added to Bookfinger's series of limited edition hardcover reprints of scarce Sax Rohmer books. *THE MOON IS RED* was first published in England in 1954, and has not previously appeared in the U.S. The Bookfinger edition is dated 1976, but was released in January 1977. More recently, the first of the Bookfinger set of Sumuru novels has appeared: *SINISTER MADONNA*. The entire series will eventually be reprinted, but not in the original order. As usual, Bookfinger is offering one copy of each new Rohmer title to *TRR* subscribers at special prices: $4.50 and $4.00, respectively.

The eight earlier Rohmer reprints from Bookfinger, with the special prices for *TRR* subscribers, are:

The Orchard of Tears	$4.50
The Sins of Sêverac Bablon	4.50
Salute to Bazarada & other stories	4.50
Tales of East and West [U.S. edition]	4.50
Bimbashi Barûk of Egypt	4.00
The Exploits of Captain O'Hagan	4.00
Seven Sins	4.00
Wulfheim	4.00

All except *Tales of East and West*, *Bimbashi Barûk of Egypt* and *Seven Sins* are first U.S. editions.

Bookfinger / Box 487, Peter Stuyvesant Station / New York, New York 10009

Bookfinger also has a number of interesting non-Rohmer books available. The two 1977 titles are *The Bride of Frankenstein* by Michael Egremont (pseudonym of Michael Harrison) and *Sinister House* by Leland Hall. The former is the original novel commissioned by the makers of the 1935 film; it bears no relation to the "Carl Dreadstone" paperback currently on sale. The Bookfinger reprint is the first U.S. edition, and contains a new introduction by George Locke. *Sinister House* is a novel of the supernatural, first published in 1919. Earlier Bookfinger editions of interest are the "Gees" novels by Jack Mann (pseudonym of E. Charles Vivian). *The Ninth Life* ($6.50) should be especially attractive to those who have enjoyed Rohmer's *The Green Eyes of Bâst* and *Brood of the Witch Queen*.

Luther Norris's Pontine Press has published a new Sherlockian chapbook, *Sherlockian Quotations* by Bruce R. Beaman. This finely printed 32-page chapbook is a compilation of nearly 400 of Mr. Sherlock

Holmes's sayings, embellished with a cover and twelve drawings by Roy Hunt. Price: $5.00 postpaid.

> Luther Norris: The Pontine Press / 3844 Watseka Avenue / Culver City, California 90230

Sax Rohmer fans, and enthusiasts of stage magic and illusions, may be interested in *Exclusive Magical Secrets* by Will Goldston (Dover Publications, 1977, #23432-0, $4.50). This is the famous "locked book of magic", privately published in London in the 1930s in a limited edition for subscribers only, all of whom were required to swear themselves to secrecy before receiving the book. Rohmer is reported to have owned a copy of the original edition.

Fans of magic (as who isn't?) will also find a wealth of nostalgic pleasure in *100 Years of Magic Posters* by Charles and Regina Reynolds (Grosset & Dunlap, #12284, large-sized paperback, 1976, $7.95). Ninety-six pages of reproductions, mostly full-page and most in color, of the advertising posters of world-famous magicians, from Alexander Hermann (*circa* 1880) to Mark Wilson and the Amazing Randi (both 1975). Chung Ling Soo, Okita, and other Oriental and pseudo-Oriental magicians are present, including David Bamberg, who performed under the name Fu-Manchu, not only on stage but in several Mexican films. The book's compilers provide an Introduction and 13 pages of informative notes on the posters and their subjects.

The Yellow Scarf by Sir Francis Tuker was originally published in 1961 by J. M. Dent, London. It is a biography of "Thuggee Sleeman" (Major-General Sir William Henry Sleeman), the man principally responsible for the uncovering and suppression of Thuggee in early and mid-nineteenth century India. The account of Sleeman's life makes fascinating reading, and the book includes in addition a selection of transcripts of interviews with Thugs and an assortment of photographs and maps. The book has recently been reprinted by White Lion Publishers Ltd., London (1977, £5.25).

If you haunt the bookstores that deal in remaindered books and specially-priced imports, you may be able to locate a copy of an excellent book: *The Dragon Empress: Life and Times of Tz'u-hsi, 1835-1908, Empress Dowager of China* by Marina Warner, a large-sized, lavishly illustrated paperback published in 1974 by Sphere Books, London, under their Cardinal imprint. (Original edition: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1972.) This is not merely a personal biography of a fascinating woman, but a history of China from the Opium Wars to the fall of the Manchu dynasty. The many photographs and art reproductions make the book a pictorial delight as well as a memorable reading experience.

From NILS HARDIN, St. Louis, Mo.:

TRR #14 arrived yesterday, and is as notable as always. The one article in this issue that I wish had been longer is the one by Jean Stafford. Such personal recollections are both interesting and important; would that she had remembered more of her contacts with Rohmer. The picture she paints of him is certainly unlike the one derived from other sources.

Don't know if I ever mentioned it to you, but I once knew a young actress (quite a good one, too) whose name was Saax Bradbury. There may even have been three *a*'s in the first name; I don't recall for certain. I believe that 'Saax'---or 'Saaax'---was a name she had concocted from her given names.

From ART SCOTT, Palo Alto, California:

Thanks for *The Rohmer Review*, which I particularly enjoyed for the *Chums* illustrations. And speaking of which, the illustration on page 18 ("Snatching up my pistol...") rang a bell immediately in my experienced art-spotter's mental file. Note the precise correspondence in pose, expression and head shape in the depiction of Dr. Fu with the famous Paget portrait of Dr. Moriarty (reproduced in Baring-Gould's *The Annotated Sherlock Holmes*, vol. II, page 303). The comic art specialist would be very prone to label the *Chums* drawing a "swipe" (the mirror-reversal of the pose is an old swipist's trick to disguise the obvious). Higher critics, however, might be expected to construct some elaborate and interesting theories from this intriguing resemblance between two master criminals... .

From JAMES SANDOE, Lincoln, Nebraska:

I remember that I met Fu Manchu first on a broad balcony in Napa County, California. Which of the tales it was, I don't remember. It was read by one or another of the granddaughters of the owner of The Ranch. (Which was actually nothing of the sort---it was a sort of toy for its owner, who made his millions in shipping. He turns up in Joe Gores' *Hammett*, and so for that matter do I, under names I don't remember and can't check at the moment.) The remembrance of Fu Manchu read aloud on summer evenings chilled me splendidly. Later, of course, there were the serials in *Collier's* and those Sunday night broadcasts with the eerie cries in the background. All of our family, listening in Palo Alto, made it a Sunday night ritual. I wonder how the broadcasts would sound today? Then, certainly, they wound a spell.

Letters

From STEPHEN SHUTT, Havre de Grace, Maryland:

Rohmer's psychic vision of Zalithea, the "Dancing Girl of Egypt", was most intriguing. The scene he described corresponds very well to the manner in which a banquet would have been held in the Egypt of that period. There were a number of useful volumes available at the turn of the century describing daily life in ancient Egypt. One of these books has recently been reprinted by Dover: *Life in Ancient Egypt* by Adolf Erman (#22632, $5.00). The book is very strong on the New Kingdom, and is packed with useful engravings and drawings.

I envy Rohmer the experience which he describes, of actually hearing a piece of the lost ancient Egyptian music. Musical texts have been discovered in Ras Shamra which preserve cult-songs from the Hurrian civilization; their precise decipherment, however, is still uncertain, though some claim to have found the key. Indeed, one student of ancient Near Eastern civilizations, a Dr. Kilmer, even performed a cult-song, with harp accompaniment (on a restored bull-headed Babylonian lyre, believe it or not!) at the University of California in 1975.

I am much less prepared to accept the authenticity of the name Rohmer concocted for his princess. "Zalithea" is certainly not an Egyptian name. In those days, pharaohs were wont to marry the daughters of foreign monarchs; Queen Nefert-yty herself was very likely a princess from Mitanni, a nation which succumbed politically during the reign of her husband Akhenaton. However, the children of such marriages were regularly given Egyptian names. I think "Zalithea" must be put down to Rohmer's unaided imagination.

Cay Van Ash's memoir of Rohmer's activities during the 1940s was enlightening. It is interesting to observe the pressure put on the authors of *Myself and Gaston Max* to be "current" with their material---e.g., changing the Russian anarchists to Nazi spies in "Broken Eagle". Similar minor changes may be found in the "Shadow of Fu Manchu" radio adaptations of the same era. These B.B.C. serials ought surely to be still available on transcription discs in the B.B.C. archives, especially the Sumuru tale, which was produced after the war.

Thanks again for printing my note on *Meryet-seger*. You will recall that I expressed some confusion over how Rohmer had found out about this little-known goddess, and why he connected her with the cult mentioned in *Grey Face*. The former question seems to have been answered. Recently I was studying the funerary complex of the Pharaoh Nebḥepet-raʿ Montju-hotep I. The structure is well known among Egyptologists because of its peculiar architectural scheme---unique in Egyptian history. The main building, an immense edifice in limestone, was built in two enormous collonaded terraces, surmounted by a pyramidion in solid stone. Gardiner, in his *Egypt of the Pharaohs*, says that this odd plan was adopted by the architect as a means of making the structure conform generally to the plan of the

Theban necropolis itself. The area in which Montju-hotep's tomb was built is adjacent to a famous eminence in the rough cliffs dominating the area, which the Egyptians called "The Summit" or "The Peak". Its semblance to a natural pyramid may account for their veneration of this object, which they connected with the cult of the goddess Meryet-seger. Rohmer was certainly familiar with this famous tomb, whose superstructure was used as a model by the architect of Queen Hatshepsut (Rohmer's Hatasu) for her own funerary temple in the Deir el-Bahari. Rohmer gives a description of the latter in his "In the Valley of the Sorceress". Regrettably the architect also utilized the older temple as a quarry, resulting in a predictable state of ruination for the site.

Coincidentally, the following two letters on related topics arrived at almost the same time in the Fall of 1976.

From LESLIE CHARTERIS (to W. O. G. LOFTS):

As a part-time Rohmer student, you might be interested in the enclosed sample of "FuMunChews", which I happened to spot in a local pub. Never thought I'd find Arthur Sarsfield in this kind of merchandising. (Although the Saint trademark was once lent to a brand of bubble-gum.)

From EVELYN A. HERZOG, New York City:

Hard to believe, but next Spring [1977] candy counters will be offering a brand of edible Chinese checkers made of candy-coated gum, called "Fu Man Chews". At least, so says the enclosed *Wall Street Journal* article, and while the *Journal* might kid us, it wouldn't lie. Gad!

> The article in question, too long to reproduce here, is from the 16 September 1976 issue of the *Wall Street Journal*. It concerns 34-year-old Alan Silverstone, owner of U. S. Chewing Gum Manufacturing Co. "When starting a game of Chinese checkers with his children recently, he noticed that the marbles were missing. He suggested using small gum balls instead, and he made up a rule that the winner could chew the loser's gum balls. That gave Mr. Silverstone the idea for a new product that he will pull out of the hat next spring: Fu Man Chews, edible Chinese checkers."
>
> There are times when comment is better omitted.

From CAY VAN ASH, Tokyo, Japan:

I distinctly approve of the Ancient Egyptian decorations [in TRR #15], of which you promise more later. I feel sure that Sax would have approved, too.

The mention of *White Velvet* reminds me that this is something of an exception among those works originally intended for dramatic presentation, since it was turned into one of Sax's better novels. This was probably due to the fact that it had been written as a film scenario and not a stage script. At the same time, I must say that I have never been able to see why Sax regarded Marlene Dietrich as suitably cast in the role of Musette. Marlene Dietrich, even in those days, was essentially the *femme fatale*, and appropriate perhaps to his Madame Sabinov, or even Fah Lo Suee, whereas Musette was definitely an *ingenue*.

As you say, details concerning "The Peculiar Case of the Poppy Club" remain a mystery. The story as related in *Master of Villainy* is very likely untrue in some particulars, but I don't think that Sax would have slandered the B.B.C. to the extent of inventing the whole episode. I imagine that some accusation of plagiarism really was made, and I suspect a cover-up. Elizabeth does, incidentally, have a manuscript of "Supper at the Poppy Club" if you could persuade her to release it for publication. [An inquiry has been sent to Mrs. Rohmer's British agents. We shall see what develops. --Ed.]

The illustrations from *Chums* are historically interesting, though not very distinguished as artwork. It seems odd that the Fu Manchu series should have been reprinted in a boys' paper, and points to the fact that juvenile fiction was, in some ways, more sophisticated in 1923 than it later became. Sax was then considered to be a mildly shocking writer, with his exotic heroines and temptresses inadequately clothed in their nightwear or diaphanous harêm outfits. Ten years later, the editors of boys' magazines had renounced sex-appeal to the extent of excluding all female characters from their pages.

Stephen Shutt's piece on "She Who Loveth Silence" was a fine

job of research. It once again underlined what I have long since found to be the truth. Often enough I have unjustly assumed some obscure reference in Sax's work to be a product of his imagination, only to discover much later that it had a basis in fact. I am still waiting with interest for some enterprising reader of *The Rohmer Review* to come up with some information concerning "the deadly honey of Trebizond".

I found the collection of drawings, *Dr. Fu-Manchu: Le Maître du Monde* by Robert Bressy [see the "Book News" column in *TRR* #13 --Ed.], fully as interesting as I had anticipated. In a typically French fashion, the publishers terminated the book without even concluding the first series. Elizabeth has often said that this was the best presentation of Fu Manchu in pictorial form, and I agree with her idea that the same drawings might profitably be used with English captions.

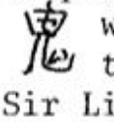
It was also amusing to read a considerable amount of *Master of Villainy* translated into French for the preface to *La Colère de Fu-Manchu*. I thought it came out quite well... .

From JOHN E. CARROLL, Baltimore, Maryland:

An odd speculation seemed to suggest itself during an examination of the texts of the first three Fu Manchu books. Was Sax Rohmer attempting to ascribe a supernatural origin to Fu Manchu?

In *The Return of Dr. Fu-Manchu*, whose title in England is *The Devil Doctor*, we read that there is a superstition in some parts of China that when a woman gives birth near a deserted burial-ground, an evil spirit of incredible age can enter into the body of the newborn infant. It is hinted that just such a circumstance attended the birth of Fu Manchu. Abnormal age could explain Fu Manchu's supernormal knowledge, including facility in all of the civilized and most of the barbaric languages of the Earth.

The idea of an evil spirit or demon reappears in Aziz's reference to "the *hakîm* [doctor] who is not a man at all but an *efreet* [demon]."

In selecting Fu Manchu's name, could Sax Rohmer have consulted a reference work on written Chinese, looking for characters meaning "ghost," "evil spirit," "demon," etc.? If so, he would have found heading this group the character , *fu*, meaning "head of a devil or phantom." Built up from this character is the word for "ghost",  which is the same character as "a devil's head" with legs added to it. This character is pronounced *kui*, the same as Kwee, Sir Lionel Barton's Chinese house-servant---another coincidence.

> The main argument against this derivation of Fu Manchu's name is that it is so much more interesting than any of the explanations that Rohmer actually gave! Surely he would have capitalized on this "supernatural connection" if he had thought of it. --Ed.

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